

Pope Francis will be remembered for his moral stand on Gaza

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While his death marks the end of an era, the Pope's legacy as a spiritual leader who stood firmly and resolutely with the oppressed, especially the Palestinians in Gaza, will endure. In the final years of his papacy, the pontiff was vocal about the war in Gaza.

From the very first days of the Israeli genocidal assault on October 7, 2023, he denounced the war, calling Gaza's suffering "deplorable" and urging the world to "see the children of Gaza."

Despite his deteriorating health and frequent hospitalizations in the past year, Pope remained in touch with the Holy Family Catholic Church in Gaza City. He insisted on checking in daily with priests and parishioners there, embodying a deeply personal and moral commitment to the people dealing with death and devastation.

Pope Francis passed away less than 24 hours after his final public appearance, an emotional moment before thousands of Catholic pilgrims gathered in St. Peter's Square for Easter Sunday Mass.

Frail and visibly weak, the 88-year-old pontiff from Argentina used the occasion to make one final plea for "a ceasefire in Gaza."

A video widely circulated on social media showed him condemning the ongoing Israeli assault on the territory, and describing the killing of civilians in Gaza as "terrorism."

Speaking from the balcony overlooking St. Peter's Square, the 226th head of the Catholic Church did not shy away from naming what he saw as genocidal atrocities.

Drawing on reports he said were coming directly from Gaza, he once again denounced the genocide of civilians, especially children and women.

"I continue to receive very serious and painful news from Gaza. Unarmed civilians are subjected to bombings and shootings. And this even happened inside the parish complex of the Holy Family," he said in the video.

In that same address, Pope shared specific accounts of killings of civilians in Gaza, saying, "A mother and her daughter, Mrs. Nahida Khalil Anton and her daughter Samar Kamal Anton, were killed and other people injured by (IOF) snipers, while going to the restroom."

He also spoke out about the toll the war has taken on Gaza's Christian community and its sacred institutions. "The convent of the Sisters of Mother Teresa was damaged and their generator was hit," he said, referring to the attacks on Christian sites in Gaza.

"It's war, it's terrorism," the Pope underscored. "This is why Scripture states that 'God makes wars cease... he breaks bows and breaks spears.' Let us pray to the Lord for peace."

Although Pope did not personally preside over the Easter Mass—delegating the role to Cardinal Angelo Comastri, the retired archpriest of St. Peter's Basilica—his appeal for a ceasefire was unmistakably clear and urgent.

His remarks came as the Israeli genocidal campaign in Gaza has claimed the lives of over 51,305 people, with some 117,096 wounded. Women and children account for over 60 percent of the victims, according to Gaza's Health Ministry.

Just days before his final call for peace and ceasefire, on April 13, the Al Ahli Arab Hospital, the only Christian medical facility in the Gaza Strip, was struck by two Israeli missiles.

The attack rendered the hospital inoperable, destroying its intensive care and surgical units. The strikes were widely condemned and described by many as a painful reminder of loss, injustice, and the enduring silence of the international community.

"They revive the pain, grief, and sense of injustice, while the world, both Christians and Muslims, remains largely silent, and tragically, in many ways complicit in this ongoing suffering," wrote Dr. Fadel Naim, an

orthopedic surgeon and chairman of the Hayat Center Emergency Preparedness at the Islamic University of Gaza, on his X page on April 13th.

Pope's final public appeal regarding Gaza can be seen as the culmination of a consistent and genuine concern for the lives of Palestinians in the devastated territory, a concern he expressed repeatedly since the outbreak of the Israeli genocidal campaign in October 2023.

As early as October 2023, during his Sunday Angelus prayer, he condemned the Israeli aggression, pleading, "Let the attacks and weapons cease, please, because it must be understood that war does not lead to any resolutions."

By late October, he had renewed that call, emphasizing the worsening humanitarian crisis in Gaza. "I implore you to stop, in the name of God. Ceasefire."

As the war entered its second month, Francis again spoke out, urging global leaders to act. "I renew my appeal for an end to war and for more humanitarian aid to reach Gaza."

On March 23, 2025, while recovering from bilateral pneumonia at Rome's Gemelli Hospital, Pope Francis made his first public appearance in weeks.

Just five days after a renewed wave of Israeli airstrikes on Gaza, the pontiff once again voiced his anguish over the spiraling crisis. "I am saddened by the resumption of heavy Israeli bombing on the Gaza Strip, causing many deaths and injuries," he said.

On Easter Sunday, March 31, 2024, he delivered his traditional Urbi et Orbi blessing from the central balcony of St. Peter's Basilica before a crowd of 60,000.

Six months into the Israeli assault on Gaza, Pope used the solemn occasion to renew his appeal for peace and humanitarian access. "I appeal once again that access to humanitarian aid be ensured to Gaza," he urged.

He also spoke directly to the suffering of children, delivering one of the most poignant moments of his address. "How much suffering we see in the eyes of children, the children have forgotten to smile in those war zones. With their eyes, children ask us: Why? Why all this death? Why all this destruction? War is always an absurdity and a defeat."

Later that year, on November 19, Pope released a book titled *Hope Never Disappoints: Pilgrims Toward a Better World* as part of his reflections ahead of the 2025 Jubilee Year.

In it, he addressed several global crises, including the war on Gaza and called for accountability of the Israeli regime in very clear terms. "According to some experts, what is happening in Gaza has the characteristics of a genocide. It should be carefully investigated to determine whether it fits into the technical definition formulated by jurists and international bodies."

On December 21, 2024, he condemned the Israeli regime's continued offensives in Gaza during an address to the Roman Curia, following reports of an airstrike in northern Gaza that killed 10 members of a single family, including seven children.

"Yesterday, they did not allow the Patriarch into Gaza as promised. Yesterday, children were bombed. This is cruelty, this is not war," he said, denouncing the attack in stark terms.

Beyond his public statements, Pope Francis offered quiet, persistent support to the besieged Christian community in Gaza through nightly phone calls to the Holy Family Church.

[SOURCE: PRESS TV]

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